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Turning Inside Out? Globalization, Neo-liberalism and Welfare States

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Abstract: Apocalyptic accounts of globalization bringing about the end of the welfare state (and the nation state) have been countered by political-institutionalist views of adaptation. Such views treat globalization as an external force, or pressure, rather than a set of processes that are also internalized within nations. I argue that a more differentiated view of globalization can reveal how it has unsettled welfare state/nation-state formations. In the process, taken-for-granted meanings and boundaries of nation-state-welfare have been destabilized. I conclude by suggesting that these processes have made citizenship a distinctive focus of political tensions and conflicts.

Keywords: citizenship; globalization; nation, neo-liberalism; state; welfare

Résumé : Des descriptions apocalyptiques de la globalisation provoquant la fin de l'État-Providence (et de l'État-Nation) ont été compensées par des visions institutionnelles d'adaptation. De telles vues considèrent la globalisation comme force externe, ou une pression, plutôt que comme un ensemble de processus qui se passent aussi à l'intérieur des nations. Je soutiens qu'une vision plus différenciée de la globalisation peut indiquer comment elle a affecté les formations de l'État-Providence ou de l'État-Nation. Dans ce processus, des significations prises pour acquises et des frontières de l'État-Nation-Providence ont été déstabilisées. Je conclus en émettant l'hypothèse que ces processus ont fait de la citoyenneté un foyer particulier de tensions et de conflits politiques.

Mots-clés : citoyenneté, mondialisation, nation, néolibéralisme, état, bien-être

This article emerges from an inter-disciplinary encounter, exploring what happens when anthropological approaches are brought to bear on questions that are conventionally understood as belong to other disciplines—in this case, politics, sociology and social policy. It examines ways of thinking about the relationship between globalization and welfare states and exploits anthropological analyses to reframe these issues. This encounter is, of course, partial and selective. These particular forms of disciplinary border crossing are enabled by a particular orientation—a shared concern with culture. This article borrows from anthropology to enable the “cultural turn” in social policy (Clarke, 2002). I have two ambitions for this article. One is that it moves on the debate about welfare states in my “home” discipline of social policy. The second is that it intersects productively with work in anthropology on welfare states, welfare reform and citizenship (e.g., Goode and Maskovsky, 2001; Gupta, 2001; Kingfisher, 2002; Ong, 1999). Both ambitions reflect a continuing belief in the value of border-crossing as a practice that enables and sustains “rethinking” as a core element of doing academic work.¹

Globalization has emerged as one of the core concepts of contemporary social analysis (see the overview in Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton 1999, for example). It has proved to be both influential and elusive. It has been brought to bear in the rethinking of central issues (see, for example, Appadurai, 2001; Sassen, 2001). At the same time, it has been challenged and critiqued as inaccurate and misleading (e.g. Hirst and Thompson, 1999). Here I explore its significance for thinking about the transformations of welfare states. In the process, I will argue against reductionist and economic conceptions of globalization propounded by both enthusiasts and critics. This “apocalyptic” view of globalization as the force of global capital/markets sweeping all before them as they remake the world in their image is flawed in a number of ways (empirically, analytically

and politically). However, I will suggest that globalization remains significant as a site for thinking about the multiple destabilizations and dislocations that assail the welfare state/nation-state complex (Clarke, 2004). This will mean arguing for a more differentiated, uneven view of globalization as unlocking old, and taken for granted, formations of state, economy and society and creating possibilities, and pressures, for new alignments. As Yeates argues, globalization is a difficult issue for the study of social policy:

Its integration into the field of social policy poses questions about many of the assumptions, concepts and theories that have been integral to social policy analysis. Social policy as a field of academic study is ill-suited to thinking beyond the nation state as its theories and concepts were developed in a national context. (2001: 19)

Nevertheless, globalization has been identified as a central force in the remaking of welfare states. Globalization has been seen as marking: the dominance of economics over politics; the power of global capital over nation-states; the installation of markets as dominant institution of co-ordination; and, finally, the “end” or dissolution of nation-states and welfare states (these issues are discussed more extensively in Clarke, 2001a, 2004; and Yeates, 2001). Here I examine the relationship between globalization and welfare states around three focal points:

- the argument between political-economy and political-institutionalist conceptions of globalization and welfare states (and its limitations);
- the relationship between globalization and neo-liberalism as a global strategy (but one which is enacted differentially);
- globalization as a process that takes place inside as well outside nation-states/welfare states.

I suggest that a more differentiated and uneven view of globalization is necessary for understanding what has been happening to welfare states (and nation states). I try to show how such a view of globalization illuminates the central and contested status of citizenship in the contemporary realignments of nations, states and welfare.

Globalization and the End of the Welfare State

Globalization’s relationship to welfare states has been conventionally conceived as an external force or pressure that acts to dissolve or undermine the welfare state and the nation state. The “strong” (Yeates, 2001) or

“apocalyptic” (Clarke, 2001b) view of globalization identifies the power of unleashed free markets (or global capital) to transform the world economically, politically and culturally. The rise of the global economy, in these accounts, dissolves barriers, blockages and borders that might stand in the way of the free movement of capital. Aided and abetted—or even driven—by information technology innovations, capital becomes “hypermobile,” shedding its local or national moorings. All societies become subject to the same pressures. They encounter the same economic pressures (to open their economies; become “attractive” to investment; create flexible workers). They experience the same political pressures (to create low tax regimes; reduce “unproductive” public spending; deregulate capital and labour markets; support capital formation and accumulation). And they are subjected to the same cultural pressures (towards a global/American culture of consumption). As Yeates summarizes it:

Overall, this account of the relationship between globalization and social policy stresses downward pressures on welfare states and the “prising open” of social pacts underpinning them. The influence of “strong” globalization theory’s precepts and predictions is clearly evident in the way that the content of social policy is presented as being determined by “external”—mainly economic—constraints, largely beyond the control of governments; that national political, cultural and social differences will simply be “flattened” and social standards will plummet by the sheer “weight” and “force” of global economic forces. (2001: 26)

Globalization has been predominantly conceived of as an economic process or, perhaps more accurately, a process whose primary driving forces are economic ones. With the dissolution of the communist bloc, the world is increasingly envisaged as a single integrated market, in which deregulation works in the service of “free trade.” Such processes have called into question the role of nation-states, national governments and their public spending programs (including social welfare) in a number of ways. First, there has been for some time a clear “business agenda” (Moody, 1987), in which corporate capital has articulated its demand for “business friendly environments” (places with low tax, low regulation, and low cost, low risk, labour). Such demands have been enforced by “capital flight”: the reality or threat of relocating investment, industrial and commercial processes elsewhere. Second, such concerns have been installed as “global economic wisdom” in a variety of supra-national

organizations and agencies (such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the World Trade Organization, see Deacon, 1997). Their policies have tended to reinforce a vision of minimalist or “laissez-faire” government, centred on reducing levels of taxation and public spending. Fourthly, the process of “economizing” political, social and cultural realms reworks discussions of the relations between “culture” and “economy” (e.g. Ray and Sayer, 1999; du Gay and Pryke, 2001). Finally, there have been strong national and transnational political forces articulating and enforcing this vision of a global world of free trade. Neo-liberal political ideology has been unevenly influential but its effects have been particularly strong in Anglophone states (the U.K., U.S. and New Zealand, for example).²

This changing political economy has implications for the way welfare states are viewed. The most apocalyptically pessimistic view is that the new global economy has sounded the death knell for the developed (or “European”) welfare state. Policies of economic and social management are not sustainable by national governments in the face of deregulated capitalism. Ulrich Beck, for example, has argued that

The premises of the welfare state and pension system, of income support, local government and infrastructural policies, the power of organized labour, industry-wide collective bargaining, state expenditure, the fiscal system and “fair” taxation—all this melts under the withering sun of globalization....(Beck, 2000: 1)

There are reasons for treating such accounts of the end of the welfare state with some caution. One concerns the comparative evidence for welfare state decline or retrenchment (e.g. Kuhnle, 2000; Sykes, Palier and Prior, 2001; Taylor-Gooby, 2001). A number of studies have highlighted continuing divergences in national welfare states, despite evidence that international pressures on national governments are increasing. Kersbergen argues that:

Empirical evidence and historical research necessarily lags behind sweeping theories. But whenever empirical evidence is presented, there seems to be little confirmation of radical changes induced by the dramatic crises that the theories so forcefully prophesied. No doubt, the empirical studies record extensively the immense pressures on, as well as the massive challenges to, the welfare state. Moreover, they provide evidence for incremental adjustment in the major social programmes, decreasing growth of social expenditures retrenchment....Welfare state research in the 1990s further documented empirically that wel-

fare states have been remarkably resistant to change notwithstanding the mounting challenges they face. Not surprisingly, a major explanatory problem for these dominant welfare state theories was the persistence rather than the crisis or “breakdown” of the major institutions of the welfare state. Both macro- and meso-institutional theories started to identify the crucial institutional mechanisms (e.g., path dependency and lock-in) that explain welfare state persistence. (2000: 20)

This more sceptical view of globalization’s effects has become firmly established in comparative and international studies in social policy (see, inter alia, Alcock and Craig, 2001; Esping-Anderson, 1996; Gough, 2000; Sykes, Palier and Prior, 2001). Esping-Anderson and his colleagues conclude that “global economic competition does narrow policy choice” but that “standard accounts are exaggerated and risk being misleading. In part, the diversity of welfare states speaks against too much generalization” (1996: 2). This, then, points to a second approach to globalization and social welfare: one that stresses political-institutional differentiation and adaptation. While accepting the shifting economic alignment towards greater global integration, such studies point to the continuing importance of national politics and institutional arrangements for choices over the shape, direction and character of welfare policies:

There are additional reasons why we should not exaggerate the degree to which global forces overdetermine the fate of national welfare states. One of the most powerful conclusions in comparative research is that political and institutional mechanisms of interest representation and political consensus-building matter tremendously in terms of managing welfare, employment and growth objectives. (Esping-Anderson, 1996: 6.)

Although the apocalyptic view of globalization is being modified in these arguments, some of the core assumptions about the character of globalization as a social force remain in place. While these political-institutionalist analyses have provided a valuable counterweight to the excesses of strong or apocalyptic theories of globalization, they nevertheless have some significant limitations. The following sections draw out three key problems with the institutionalist view of globalization and its relationship to welfare states/nation-states:

- the view of the state and its relationship to markets (or capital);
- the view of globalization as a deterritorialized force; and

- the view of globalization as an external or exogenous “pressure” on nation-states.

State versus Market: Another Failed Binary?

For both theoretical and political-cultural reasons, the political-institutionalist literature has tended to treat the state and the market as opposed principles of social co-ordination. This view underpins the conception of globalization as an external force acting on welfare states/nation-states. The power of capital and/or the extension of market relations are understood primarily as a challenge to the state. The state is seen as having developed as a countervailing power and influence to market failure and inequality. This juxtaposition is reflected in Esping-Anderson’s (1990) influential view of the state as securing processes of *decommodification* in welfare (taking welfare benefits and services out of the commodified relations of the market). The juxtaposition of the state and market in this way embodies a social-democratic view of the state as a corrective to market processes (and the power of capital). In some respects, this view is the mirror image of neo-liberalism’s representation of the market as hindered, blocked and distorted by the “interference” of the state.

There are both empirical and theoretical problems with this binary opposition. It occludes a long history of Marxist scholarship on the state’s relationship to capital, for instance (see, *inter alia*, Ferguson, Lavalette and Mooney, 2002; Ginsburg, 1983; Gough, 1979; Offe, 1984). Marxist theorizations have ranged from seeing the state as “the executive committee of the bourgeoisie” (in Engels’ phrase) to treating it as structurally bound to the “logic of capital.” Other versions give priority to seeing the state as the (contradictory) site of political class struggle (and the temporary reconciliation of conflicting interests between labour and capital). Such studies have pointed to the ways in which the state is systematically implicated in the development of capital: securing the conditions of accumulation; institutionalizing and legitimating its core interests (not least in legal forms); and attempting to create the social and political conditions for new forms of capital accumulation (for example the “regulationist” approach: Jessop, 2002; Peck, 2001). These views suggest a more complicit, implicated or articulated view of the relationship between the state and capital than is visible in much of the globalization literature. They also indicate that capital may find some forms and functions of the state advantageous.

These theoretical possibilities are reflected in the compound relations that persist between states and dif-

ferent forms of capital (transnational as well as national-domestic). Surveying this field of relations between capital and the state (which may range from enthusiastic mutuality to grudging concessions), Yeates has argued that:

The presentation of the state-capital relationship as one in which capital is essentially in conflict with the state, or hegemonic after defeating the state, is inaccurate. It posits capital always in opposition to the state, whereas it is more useful to see capital and state often allied together, as well as often in conflict....The presentation of capital acting without regulation is also inaccurate: it is bound in various webs of regulations and governance, which it accepts grudgingly, attempts to circumvent and which it very occasionally invites. Indeed transnational capital wishes to secure the support of the state, not to replace the state. (2001: 93)

There is a consistent problem in the study of globalization that occurs when “globalization-in-general”—the complex of new alignments of nations, regions and transnational agents linked in a series of flows, connections and disjunctures (Appadurai, 1996)—is not differentiated from the neo-liberal *strategy* of globalization.³ This distinction is, of course, not an easy one, since the neo-liberal strategy has been profoundly influential in shaping “the global” in its image. Indeed, it forms the dominant tendency within globalization, but it is important to register that it is dominant in relation to other tendencies and possibilities—rather than being the sole form of globalization. Neo-liberalism is the “business agenda” of the dominant fractions of capital (in the financial and transnational extraction and manufacturing sectors). It is the “free trade” agenda adopted by neo-liberal governments, particularly the hegemonic U.S. It is the “Washington consensus” of markets, flexible labour and the diminished role of governments placed at the heart of the major supra-national institutions (the World Trade Organization, World Bank, etc.). But this is not the only “globalization.” There are flows and conjunctures of people, ideas, cultures and politics that co-exist (more or less uncomfortably) with neo-liberal globalization in—and across—the same global space (Appadurai, 2001; Massey, 1999).

This neo-liberal strategy does have a strong anti-statist tendency that functions as a core rhetorical feature of neo-liberal discourse. However, we should probably be wary of taking neo-liberals at their word in a number of ways. Anti-statism is not the same as a wish to abolish the state—rather it involves what Jones and

Novak (1999) nicely term “retooling the state,” reconfiguring it in a form more favourable to capital’s current interests. It also seems necessary to caution against assuming that political strategies always work in practice (since there may be a few problems of implementation)—or that discourses describe the world (rather than being a means of trying to make the world conform). Too often, studies have been willing to treat the objectives of neo-liberalism as though they are outcomes. Instead, it may be analytically (and possibly politically) important to think of neo-liberalism as a strategy that struggles to overcome blockages, refusals, resistances and interruptions. These may be the socio-technical problems of “control at a distance” or the “nostalgic/traditional” reluctance of some people to give up valued habits, practices and spaces in the name of modernization, free trade or the new world order (see *inter alia*, Appadurai, 2001; Gupta, 1998). At the same time, it may be worth thinking about neo-liberal strategy as producing new blockages, refusals, resistances and contradictions of its own. These both get in the way of the successful implementation of its business plan—and call forth further “innovations” to overcome them (ranging from new information technologies to the use of military force, for example).

Differentiating neo-liberal globalization from other processes and relationships makes it possible to see that the “state versus market” focus may have obscured other relationships—and changes. One of the domains obscured by this focus is the domestic, private or familial realm and its articulations with both the market and the state in the production and consumption of welfare—and in the construction of types of “welfare subjects” (see Lewis, G., 2000). There is a substantial literature challenging both political-economy and political-institutionalist studies for their omission of gender relations or for bolting them on as “residual” categories (see, for example, Langan and Ostner, 1990; Lewis, J., 2000; Orloff, 1993; Williams, 1995). The way that attention to socio-economic groupings (or “classes”) has obscured gender relations mirrors the way that the state-market focus obscures the private-domestic-familial realm. This is not surprising since the private/public dichotomy is densely interwoven with gender distinctions—both historically and in its contemporary reformulations (Gordon, 1994; Hall, 1998; Kingfisher, 2002). Nevertheless, the role of the private realm (rather than the private sector) in the production and consumption of welfare disrupts the conception of welfare as constituted on an axis of commodification-decommodification that is located in the state-market distinction (see Cochrane,

Clarke and Gewirtz, 2001). It is one more reason for escaping the analytic confines of the state versus market binary and there are echoes here of Ong’s (1999) approach to thinking about the intersection of bio-political, capital accumulation and state regimes in the construction and regulation of “flexible citizenship.”

Turning Inside Out: Globalization and Nation-States

At this point, I want to return to another analytic construct that political-economic and political-institutionalist approaches share: the conception of globalization as an external or exogenous force in relation to welfare states/nation-states. While political-economic analyses see globalization as dissolving the borders and capacities of nation-states, political-institutionalist approaches see nation-states as the locus of adaptation to the external pressures of globalization. This conception of globalization as an external or exogenous force rests on two rather unreliable views of spatial formation. First, it juxtaposes the apparently solidly rooted, territorialized, space of nation-states with the mobile, transient and deterritorialized flows of global capital. This juxtaposition overstates both the geographical solidity of nation-states, and the fluidity of capital. As a number of authors have demonstrated, even the most mobile forms of capital (in the finance sector) require “places”: to be materialized, to be traded, to be serviced, to be managed and so on:

The global economy cannot be taken simply as given, whether that is given as a set of markets or a function of the power of multinational corporations. To the contrary, the global economy is something that has to be actively implemented, reproduced, serviced and financed...global-economic features like hypermobility and time-space compression are not self-generative. They need to be produced, and such a feat of production requires capital fixity...vast concentrations of very material and not so mobile facilities and infrastructures. (Sassen, 2001: 262)

At the same time, nation-states are both more permeable and changeable than the view of them being territorially solidly rooted would allow. This leads us to the second problem about the spatial character of nation-states. The “external pressure/internal adaptation” conception of welfare state change *mis-places* globalization. While globalization involves flows, relationships and institutions that take place “outside” particular nation-states (from transnational corporations to the World Bank) as well as processes that traverse nation-states;

these processes, relationships and institutions are also materialised within the borders of nation-states. Corporate headquarters, production and distribution systems, call centres, inter/transnational agencies are all territorially embodied within nation-states (Yeates, 2001). So, too, are the outputs, products and “consumables” of global capitalism. These products may “change places,” carrying specific material products and cultural formations to be used or appropriated in new locales. But the producers and consumers are located within (a variety of) territorial boundaries. Sassen captures the spatial complexity of these changes by suggesting that the new alignments (in this case of financial sector organizations) are partial and multiple:

Such firms’ activities are simultaneously partly deterritorialized and partly deeply territorialized; they span the globe, yet they are strategically concentrated in specific places....The strategic geography of this distribution fluidly traverses borders and spaces while installing itself in key cities. It is a geography that explodes conventional notions of context and traditional hierarchies of scale. It does so, in part, through the unbundling of national territory. We can therefore understand the global economy as materializing in a worldwide grid of strategic places, uppermost among which are major international business and financial centers. (2001: 271)

As a result, the “external pressure/internal adaptation” model tries to sustain a distinction that limits our capacity to understand the spatial realignments associated with globalization. It is possible to see fractions of capital that are already (or wish to be) international or transnational *within* the “national” space of nation-states. It is possible to see political blocs that propound the necessity or desirability of becoming “global” *within* the “national” political formation. And it is possible to see “national” citizens who actively seek aspects of international, transnational and global politics and culture (from international aid, through transnational political alliances to baseball caps). Indeed, to take one example, one might argue that the U.K. has been dominated by alliances of capital and neo-liberal/globalizing political blocs, as well as providing a ready consumer market for American cultural forms and symbols. Of course, pointing to the U.K. being “dominated by” such neo-liberal/Atlanticist orientations is not the same as suggesting that these trends represent the whole of the “nation.” Refusals of the neo-liberal global imaginary are articulated in a variety of names (the nation; Europe; the environment; tradition, culture, and so on).

Nevertheless, the overriding point here is that globalization is not a disembodied and external condition, but is materialized within nation-states (though differently in particular national settings).

The global-national distinction is also reflected in a conception of differentiated national political-institutional forms threatened by a homogenizing globalization. Political-institutionalist analyses often treat nation-states as having distinct and differentiated internal political-institutional trajectories, these are counterposed to the homogenous and homogenizing trajectory of globalization. I want to argue instead, that as national economic, social and political formations are being realigned in a new configuration of global relations, they are subject to both homogenizing and differentiating pressures. On the one hand they are under pressure to conform to (more or less explicit and institutionalized) demands of neo-liberal models of global political economy, or to the conditions of insertion into regional economic-political blocs, such as the European Union. On the other hand, they are under pressures to have a distinct, and differentiated, trading, cultural and political identity: a “place in the world.” Hudson and Williams, for example, have argued that the “economic” integration of the EU contains dynamics of both homogenization and differentiation:

...these changes in the character of the EU can also be regarded as bringing about a homogenization of its space, seeking to establish the free play of capitalist social relations over its entirety. At the same time, giving wider and freer play to market forces has led to increasing territorial differentiation within the EU. Seemingly paradoxical, these processes of homogenization are enhancing the significance of differences between places in influencing the locations of economic activities and the quality of people’s lives within Europe. (1999: 8)

Both of these types of pressure intersect with, and are articulated by, “internal” or domestic economic, cultural and political blocs. Both are global in scope, and not just European. In this section, I have tried to suggest that “external/internal” conception of globalization’s relationship to welfare states/nation-states obscures some of the crucial dynamics of both globalization and the trajectories of nation-states. In the following section, I want to go further to examine the implications for the place of nation-states within the study of social policy.

Unsettled Formations: Nations, States and Welfare

Viewing globalization as an internal as well as an external dynamic in relation to nation states/welfare states underscores the increased salience of borders in the contemporary world (Leontidou and Afouxenidis, 1998). The interpenetration or mingling of the “national” and the “global” discussed above indicate the permeability of national borders—although this is uneven (in different places, in relation to different sorts of object and people). In particular, the current globalization involve new forms and trajectories of mobility of people (as migrations, diasporas, nomadism: see, inter alia, Brah, 1997; Castles, 2000; Cohen, 1997; Gilroy, 1993). These mobilities call into question the (assumed) unity of nation-states and the “peoples” that inhabit them. Nations—and their borders—are also on the move, as nations and states fragment, realign or are created anew. Neither the solidity nor the stability of nation-states can be taken for granted politically or analytically.

This is a particular problem for the subject of social policy, since the nation-state is a foundational concept (see Clarke, 1996). It is also a concept whose provenance, applicability and stability are largely taken for granted within the subject. The nation-state provides the unacknowledged back drop for most “national” studies of social policies, politics and ideologies—the metaphorical and literal “terrain” on which such conflicts and developments take place. It is also the elementary unit of analysis for comparative social policy that underpins the exploration of the (more or less) divergent models, principles, institutions and (more recently) trajectories of national welfare systems (see, for example, Alcock and Craig, 2001; Clasen, 1999; Cochrane, Clarke and Gewirtz, 2001; Esping-Anderson, 1996). The growing attention to trends, transitions and trajectories marks a shift away from the dominance of static typologies (as the classification of difference) within comparative social policy. It reflects an attempt to capture the dynamics of welfare state change—reform, restructuring, retrenchment, resistance and so on—but it does so in ways that leave the foundational concept of the nation-state in place. This underestimates how the nation-state itself is implicated in the dynamics of destabilization and realignment. Appadurai has argued that one of the key sites of these dynamics is the nation-state itself:

It has now become something of a truism that we are functioning in a world fundamentally characterized by objects in motion. These objects include ideas and

ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, technologies and techniques. This is a world of flows....It is also, of course, a world of structures, organizations and other stable social forms. But the apparent stabilities that we see are, under close examination, usually our devices for handling objects characterized by motion. The greatest of these apparently stable objects is the nation-state, which is today frequently characterized by floating populations, transnational politics within national borders, and mobile configurations of technology and expertise. (2001: 5)

Here we are offered an approach to the nation-state that sees it as traversed by different—and disjunctured—flows whose effect is to unsettle or de-stabilize its apparent stability and solidity. Indeed, Akhil Gupta has argued that this attention to dislocations may enable us to escape the forlorn debate for or against the “disappearance of the nation-state.” This binary choice, he suggests, may “be missing the point” because “one can often point to persuasive evidence that leads to *both* conclusions for the *same* cases” (1998: 319). As with Sassen’s view of global cities noted above, the processes unsettling the nation-state may be *partial and multiple*. But it is worth re-tracing some steps backwards here, since there is a distinction to be made between a view of the nation-state as once solid and stable, and now unsettled; and a view of it as always contingent, constructed and potentially unstable. The former view treats the present situation as a break from the historical certainties of nation-states: instability is seen as a feature of the current period. The latter view sees those certainties—Appadurai’s “apparent stability”—as social and political accomplishments in at least two senses. First, they have always been constructions in the face of the contending and conflicting forces that consistently threaten to destabilise nation-states. Second, they are myths or imaginaries constructed in the face of the empirical instabilities of nation-states. The historical experience of most nation-states has not been that of stable borders, territorial integrity and a solidified national identity. On the contrary, borders have proved highly mobile, nations and states have chopped and changed, and national identities have been invented, and reinvented, regularly. For large parts of the world, colonial relations have meant that all the features supposedly associated with nation-state formation have been denied or distorted by the operations of colonial economic, cultural and political power. Even the “model” European nation-states (and “Europe” itself) can be usefully viewed as the outcomes of elaborate and contested processes of construction:

involving spatial and cultural instabilities, nation-building and rebuilding, and the occasional war (see, for example, Christiansen, Jorgensen and Wiener, 2001; Fink, Lewis and Clarke, 2001; Hudson and Williams, 1999; Jonsson, Tagil and Tornqvist, 2000).

These model nation-states were supposedly marked by “territorial integrity.” However, the integrity of most European nation-states rested on the critical interpenetration of colonial places with metropolitan cores—not a solidified economic, cultural and political unity, but an ensemble of dispersed economic, cultural and political relations that enabled the imaginary of the sovereign, unified nation-state. This imaginary has been central to the social sciences. As Sassen puts it: “Much of social science has operated with the assumption of the nation-state as a container, representing a unified spatiotemporality. Much of history, however, has failed to confirm this assumption” (2001: 261). Treating the nation-state as a unified block gets in the way of understanding how contemporary processes are reshaping both nations and states—and unsettling the “hyphen” between nation and state which naturalizes their conjunction:

That this curiously hyphenated entity, the nation-state, does not evoke constant surprise is a testimony to its complete ideological hegemony. Scholarly work has tended to underestimate seriously the importance of that hyphen, which simultaneously erases and naturalizes what is surely an incidental coupling.... (Gupta, 1998: 316-7)

In his discussion of the “postcolonial condition,” Gupta makes elegant use of this “hyphen” between nation and state—and its destabilization. He argues that its unsettling reveals the contingently constructed coupling of nation and state, such that they become capable of being treated (analytically *and* politically) as separable. More importantly, he suggests that the unsettling of the hyphen puts in play new social tensions and forces:

The hyphen between nation and state holds together a particular bundle of phenomena that are increasingly in tension. It is this that makes the “postcolonial condition” different from the order of nation-states brought together by colonialism and nationalism. (1998: 327)

Within the processes of globalization, we have seen struggles to abolish nations—and states (in the breakup of the former Soviet Union); to create, or recreate nations (from within the former Eastern bloc and in Africa); to detach nations and “peoples” from states (in

the former Yugoslavia; in Kurdish struggles for autonomy); to claim and internalize territory with nations (e.g., the disputed space of Kashmir) and to dismantle former unities of nations-and-states (as in the move to devolution in the United Kingdom). Much of this comes on top of earlier waves of territorial-political realignments across the relations of the “West and the rest” in the form of (partial, unfinished) de-colonization and the consequent insertion of de-colonized nations into the new global political economy. Such complex and multiple processes can hardly be grasped in the debate about the “end of the nation-state.” Rather, we may need to pay attention to unfinished, partial and conflictual processes of “unsettling” and attempts at “resettling”—the construction of (temporarily) stabilized new formations.⁴ Gupta argues that

What I would like to suggest is that there is a growing tension between nation and states so that the particular enclosure that was conjured by their historically fortuitous conjunction may be slowly falling apart....The kinds of activities and meanings that were brought together by nation-states—the regulation of industries, goods and people; the control and surveillance of populations; the provision of “security” with respect to other nation-states...; the employment of laws; the feeling of belonging to “a people”; the belief in particular historical narratives of identity and difference—may be untangling....It is very likely that they will reconstitute themselves into different bundles. But it is highly unlikely that the reconstituted entities will simply be reproduction of nation-states, writ large or small. (1998: 318).

The contemporary politics of “welfare reform” take place on a ground where established conceptions of people, nation and state have become unsettled and contested. The unsettling of the nation-state hyphen is accelerated by the increasing flows of people across borders and the compound configurations of attachments, identity and social relations that they construct in those flows. Migration, tourism, a mobile business class and nomadism change the relationships between people and places. Social relations (of family and friendship); identities (of ethnicity, religion and local-ness) and politico-cultural affinities traverse space—connecting different places of living and attachment (e.g., Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2001). For studies of social policy, transnational “chains of care” are increasingly significant as migrant women perform waged care work in the West, while using those wages to support families (and even buy care) “at home” (e.g., Hochschild, 2001).

I have tried to use anthropological conceptions of globalization and the postcolonial to open up the welfare state/nation-state complex that is so central to comparative studies of social policy. Thinking of (temporarily) stabilised formations of nation-state-welfare being unsettled enables us to see ways through the binary choice between globalization and nation-states. More generally, examining these unsettled relationships between place, people and nation, and nation, state and welfare allow us to understand why questions of citizenship have become so significant.

Citizenship in Flux

Citizenship is one of the critical sites around which these instabilities coalesce. This is hardly surprising since citizenship is a status formed in the construction and development of hyphenated nation-states and the relationships with their “people.” Citizenship articulates the twin couplets nation-state and welfare-state. Like the nation-state, citizenship has been historically “naturalized” in a number of ways. It has rested on a taken-for-granted assumption about the equivalence of the nation-state, territorial boundaries and “membership” of the nation—though, as Lewis argues, this nation may be an “imperial nation” (with “membership” unevenly and differentially spread beyond the national space, Lewis, 1998: 135-143). It has typically presumed a natural fit between nation, people and “race”—treating them as co-terminous, and mutually reinforcing, categories. It has also been the site in which “universalism” and structures of subordination, marginalization and exclusion have been articulated (see, inter alia, Lewis, 1998; Lister, 1997). The white, male, able-bodied, wage-earning subject has been the typical “universal citizen” of Western welfare capitalism—the “independent” figure able to claim and enact legal, political and social rights. Around him are a range of structurally differentiated “incomplete” subjects (placed by age, gender, disability and “race”—ethnicity-nationality) whose access to citizenship and its rights is more conditional, marginal secondary—or who may simply be excluded.

Not surprisingly, then, citizenship is a highly contested status (Lister, 1997). It has been the focus of struggles within nation-states that have challenged the rights and services it provides and that have challenged the conditions of “membership.” The former have sought to extend, increase and enrich the rights of citizens and the substance of the benefits and services to which citizenship provides access (from improved and less conditional benefits through to adequate standards of care and support). The latter have sought to redefine

who is entitled to be counted as a citizen—extending the social range of “universalism” to those marginalized, excluded or subordinated by dominant definitions (and, in the process, transforming the substance of the “universal”). For these struggles, the imagery of “second class citizens” has been a powerful rhetorical figure for defining and challenging inequalities and the practices of discriminatory subordination. In practice, struggles over the content of welfare and over membership both overlap and lead to further innovation in the conception of what welfare might or should mean (see, for example, Williams, 2000). For example, challenges from the disability movement around “independence” contain a struggle about membership and conflicts over the level, conditions and character of benefits and services, while raising new possibilities about what the “independent and autonomous” citizen, so central to liberal theory, might mean in practice (Shakespeare, 2000).

These continuing challenges (and the resistances to them) have intersected with the cultural and political forces brought into play by the instabilities around the “hyphenated” nation-state. At least three dimensions stand out in this process. The first centres on *the tension between nation-states and other levels of governance* in sub- and supra-national institutions and processes (see, inter alia, Clarke, 2001b; Delanty, 2000; and Geyer, 2000). Questions of membership, authority and rights are now posed in and across multiple settings—allowing the possibility of challenges being mounted “beyond” the nation-state (for example, through the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights). The “internalization” of European Human Rights legislation within the legal systems of member-states provides a further instance of the shifting relations of “inside and outside” of nation-states. Some authors have posed the question of whether forms of “transnational citizenship” are imaginable at the point where new institutional jurisdictions coincide with migration, mobility and “detachment” from the singular territory of a nation-state (Delanty, 2000; Soysal, 1994). Ong’s exploration of “flexible citizenship” in the Chinese diaspora raises question about how people negotiate multiple attachments in a world in which formations of nation, state, capital and family are being realigned—often into new combinations characterized by what Althusser called “teeth-gritting harmony.”

The second dimension focuses on the *conflicts between varieties of multi-culturalism and varieties of nationalism* in the struggle over national identity within and beyond the nation-state (see, inter alia, Calhoun, 1997; Cohen, 1999; Hesse, 2000a). The conjunction of

postcolonialism (or what Hesse calls the “unrealized, incomplete and interrupted postcolonial settlements,” 2000b: 13) and multiple migrations creates an “identity problem” within nations and states (see, for example, Parekh, 2000; and the Home Office, 2001). This issue is variously named as “diversity,” “inclusion,” “cohesion,” “difference,” “multiethnicity” and “multiculturalism” (Hall, 2000; Lewis, 2000b). This identity problem—the unsettling of the naturalized equivalences between nation, people and race—is the site of intense conflicts as the trajectory from the colonial to the postcolonial meets old and new migrations. The challenges posed by such changes encounter attempted reconciliations around the liberal democratic imaginary of British/European “tolerance” and a “modern” sensibility of pluralism (see, for example, Baubock, Heller and Zolberg, 1996, on pluralism and Marfleet, 1999, on views of Europe as “civilizing force”). Gupta argues that the unsettling of the hyphenated nation-state is the site for regressive political-cultural projects:

To suggest that the particular historical conjuncture that brought “nation” and “state” together into a stable form of spatial organization may be coming to an end is not to argue that forms of “nation-ness” and “state-ness” are in danger of disappearing altogether. New, more menacing, racially exclusionary forms of national identity are emerging in Europe and the United States, for example (1998: 319; see also Castles, 2000; and Cohen, 1999).

The third dimension hinges on the *tension between the “withdrawal” or “retreat” of the state, and the increasing claims to citizenship and citizenship rights*. The developments discussed in the preceding paragraphs have created growing demands for and of citizenship. New claims are being made upon states to recognize “other” citizens and their needs/rights, alongside pressures to deliver adequate levels of benefits and services in appropriate forms. These claims encounter the state’s wish to create more autonomous, independent, active or self-provisioning citizens. Neo-liberal, neo-conservative and communitarian discourses share a concern to reduce the state’s “interference” in the workings of markets, families and communities. Blom Hansen and Stepputat have drawn attention to the paradox “that while the authority of the state is being constantly questioned and functionally undermined, there are growing pressures to confer full-fledged rights and entitlements on ever more citizens” (2001: 2). One effect is that benefits and services, in the Anglophone countries especially, become the targets for new practices of rationing, new

forms of conditionality, and programs of devolution, decentralization and privatization. Similarly “citizens” are the focus of attempts to “remake” them as responsible parents, active citizens and flexible workers (U.S. experiences are well surveyed in Goode and Maskovsky, 2001). Simultaneously, the shift to more “mixed” or “plural” economies of welfare provision disperses, and may fragment, the agencies responsible for organizing and delivering welfare—putting them “at arm’s length” from the state (Clarke and Newman, 1997; Hoggett, 1996). In the process—and despite the demands of citizens and would-be citizens—the state becomes more elusive and more evasive in relation to the social or welfare rights of citizens (an arm’s length being about the distance of deniability). The withdrawal of the state is not just about formal arrangements or a generalized reduction in provisioning—it has specific social dynamics that transfer costs, pressures and responsibilities in unequal ways (Clarke and Newman, 1997: 141-59; see Kingfisher, 2002, on the gendered dynamics of neo-liberal welfare “reform”). In these different ways, citizenship (as the point of articulation between nation-state-welfare) remains one of the central sites of current political and cultural conflict.

Unsettling Conversations

In this article I have tried to use encounters with anthropology to aid the process of rethinking conventional views of the relationship between globalization and welfare states. The idea of “unsettling” plays a double role in this process. It reflects the orientation of anthropological writing on globalization and nation-states that escapes the confines of a binary categorization of the global and the national. This concern with the destabilization or unsettling of previously taken-for-granted formations of nation, state (and, I would add, welfare) is profoundly important for thinking through the contradictory tendencies that both contribute to, and are put in play in, the unsettling of welfare states/nation-states. It also enables us to think about the different projects that aim to resettle or realign people, welfare and states in new formations. But secondly, the process of academic border-crossing (to borrow from anthropologists) is itself “unsettling”—in that it destabilizes foundational concepts in the “home” discipline. Social policy has worked with ideas of the “welfare state,” underpinned by the nation-state model. Unsettling those conceptual formations is a core part of “rethinking” the subject, and is aided by trans-disciplinary encounters.

For me, the (selective) encounter with anthropology has three very valuable outcomes. The first is the

capacity to rethink the welfare state/nation-state complex in a shifting global context, without being caught by either apocalyptic political-economy or inertial political-institutional analysis. The second is that anthropology's insistence on the local and the particular breaks up the persistent enthusiasm of social scientists for "grand narratives"—whether globalization, neo-liberalism, individualization or modernization. Attention to the particular clearly does not deny transnational, international or supra-national processes, but it does require thinking about how they are enacted, instantiated and lived (Lem and Leach, 2002). In terms of "welfare reform," for example, attention to the particular can illuminate the diverse incarnations of an apparently coherent political strategy (see Kingfisher, 2002, on neo-liberal welfare reform). The particular can also reveal some of the incoherence, contradictions and tensions of dominant strategies (see, for example, Hyatt, 2001, on the recruitment of "active citizens"). Finally, the particular can allow us to see some of the refusals, resistance and recalcitrance that are in play when subjects are summoned by power. This is, I hope, not a romantic view of resistance as counter-politics, but a concern with the limits and limitations of dominant strategies. New subjects do not always come when they are called. Indeed, they might not hear the call, they might not recognize themselves as its subject, or they might just answer back in a different voice (see Holland and Lave, 2001, on dialogism and contentious practices). When I go back to social policy, this is the "good sense" of anthropology that I want to take with me. But the third outcome of these encounters is a commitment to staying mobile—to creating the conditions for more "unsettling" conversations because of the ways in which they help us to think—and to think again.

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Notes

- 1 In this and other respects, this article draws on collaborative work with my colleagues at the Open University which places a premium on "rethinking" (see, for example, Lewis, Gewirtz and Clarke, 2000; and Fink, Lewis and Clarke, 2002). This article was originally a paper for a panel, organized by Catherine Kingfisher and Jeff Maskovsky at the CASCA/SANA conference in 2002 at the University of Windsor. I am grateful to the organizers and other session participants (Karen Brodsky, Dana-Ain Davis and Ida Susser) and many other people at the conference for making the "border crossing" a rewarding experience. Finally, the positive and thoughtful comments

from the *Anthropologica* reviewers helped with the revision of the paper to this form.

- 2 The significance of this cluster is reflected in recent studies of neo-liberalism and welfare that have foregrounded combinations of Anglophone nations (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.K. and U.S.)—see, for example, Kingfisher (2002), O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver (1999) and Peck (2001). There are, however, problems about generalizing about neo-liberalism as a project from these examples, since other welfare systems reveal different political formations and trajectories (see, for example, Alcock and Craig, 2001; Huber and Stephens, 2001; Kuhnle, 2000 and Sykes, Palier and Prior, 2001; Taylor-Gooby, 2001). The blurring of boundaries between national, international and transnational formations poses significant challenges for the comparative analysis of welfare states, given its conventional focus on nation-states.
- 3 In the analysis of globalization, many writers have argued for the importance of distinguishing "neo-liberal globalization" from other globalizing processes and relationships. Neo-liberalism forms a distinctive strategy for global economic realignment and for the reform of national political institutions, including the welfare/state relationship. There are some commonalities here between political economy views of neo-liberalism (as the institutional incarnation of global capital) and post-structuralist/Foucauldian views of neo-liberal governmentality. Both tend to abstract the "pure form" from its practice in particular settings. Neo-liberalism is rarely enacted as a pure form—rather it takes political shape in compound forms (Clarke, 2001c; O'Malley, forthcoming; see also Kingfisher, 2002). Viewing welfare state reform only from the strategic standpoint of neo-liberalism obscures vital alliances, resistances and contradictions in the project of welfare state reform. Programs of "welfare reform" in the U.S. and the U.K., for example, indicate the importance of looking at neo-liberalism's articulations with neo-conservatism, particularly around the intersection of welfare and racialised and gendered formations. The U.K. example suggests exploring the ways in which neo-liberalism is articulated with both "residual" and "emergent" forms of social democracy (Clarke, 2004).
- 4 I have added the idea of "unsettling" to those of "untangling" or "unbundling" partly because recent work around welfare states has made use of the idea of "settlements" and the ways in which they have become unsettled (see, for example, Clarke and Newman, 1997; Hughes and Lewis, 1998; Lister, 2002). However, it also captures something of the dynamic view of the state expressed in Gramsci's conception of a "series of unstable equilibria," which I have found valuable as a way of thinking about the achievement of (apparent) stability and its capacity for falling apart.

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